

REMARKS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the allowed claims. Applicant appreciates the time taken by the Examiner to review Applicant's application.

Drawings

In preparation for allowance, formal replacements drawings are submitted herein.

Claim Objections

Claims 15-17 were objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicant has amended claim 11 to incorporate the limitations of claim 15 and cancelled claim 15. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 11 and 16-17 are novel and nonobvious in light of the cited prior art.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 11 was rejected as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,731,644 ("Epps") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,128,666 ("Muller") and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,870,809 ("Vaidya").

Claim 18 was rejected as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,731,644 ("Epps") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,128,666 ("Muller"), U.S. Patent No. 6,870,809 ("Vaidya") and U.S. Patent No. 6,567,414 ("Deng").

Claims 15-17 were objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant has amended claim 11 to incorporate the limitations of claim 15. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 11 is novel and nonobvious over the cited prior art. Because claim 18 depends from claim 11, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 18 is also novel and nonobvious over the cited prior art. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

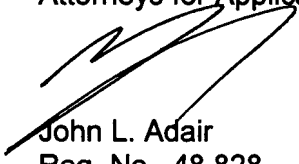
CONCLUSION

Applicant has now made an earnest attempt to place this case in condition for allowance. Other than as explicitly set forth above, this reply does not include an acquiescence to statements, assertions, assumptions, conclusions, or any combination thereof in the Office Action. Applicant thanks the Examiner for the allowance of claims 4, 5, and 8 and, for the foregoing reasons and for other reasons clearly apparent, requests allowance of claims 11 and 16-18. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number listed below for prompt action in the event any issues remain.

The Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 50-3183 of Sprinkle IP Law Group.

Respectfully submitted,

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